



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8

1595 Wynkoop Street
DENVER, CO 80202-1129
Phone 800-227-8917
<http://www.epa.gov/region08>

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Honorable Max Baucus
United States Senator
8 Third Street East
Kalispell, Montana 59923

Dear Senator Baucus:

Thank you for your letter of May 12, 2008, on behalf of Ms. Katie Johnson of Libby, Montana. Ms. Johnson wrote to you concerning the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recent assessment activities on the property she rents at 733 Farm-to-Market Road, lot #5. I appreciate this opportunity to provide the following information in response to Ms. Johnson's concerns.

EPA recently assessed the property at 733 Farm-to-Market Road, lot #5 in response to a phone request made by Ms. Johnson to the Libby EPA Information Center. Prior to that call, EPA conducted a screening at the mobile home park where the lot is located in 2002 and 2003, as part of the site-wide Contaminant Screening Study (CSS). However, due to the constant flux of residents, both the numbering scheme and the layout of the mobile home park have changed. Because of this, this exact lot, in its present circumstance, had not been inspected.

Although results of the current samples collected at the property are not yet available, our field inspection did reveal that there is an appreciable amount of vermiculite material scattered throughout Ms. Johnson's front yard. Because it is very likely that this material contains Libby amphibole asbestos (LA), we advised Ms. Johnson to keep her children and the family dog out of the front yard. This would limit any exposure to the children, as well as reduce the potential for LA to be tracked inside her home.

Under our current contractual arrangements for property cleanups, EPA would normally put together a fairly detailed design for the property and take competitive bids for its cleanup. This approach greatly reduces the Agency's cost for a cleanup, thus allowing us to maximize the number of properties cleaned in a given year. However, even if the process is expedited (i.e., putting some properties ahead of those already in the cleanup queue), it can take two to four months. Because this issue has come up several times in the last year, EPA is considering an additional time-and-materials contract. This would allow us to expedite the cleanup of newly discovered properties like Ms. Johnson's with the potential for high exposure. In summary,

EPA is looking for a way to accelerate the assessment and cleanup of properties such as Ms. Johnson's. We anticipate that we will be able to conduct a cleanup at Ms. Johnson's property this summer.

I hope this information will be useful in your response to Ms. Johnson. If you or your staff have additional questions regarding EPA's work in Libby, please contact me or Sandy Fells, Regional Congressional Liaison, at 303-312-6604.

Sincerely yours,



Robert E. Roberts
Regional Administrator

